

James J. Hill House
240 Summit Avenue
St. Paul
Ramsey County
Minnesota

HABS No. MN-52

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62-SAIPA,
15-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

JAMES J. HILL HOUSE

HABS No. MN-52

Location: 240 Summit Avenue, St. Paul, Ramsey County,
Minnesota.

Present Owner: St. Paul Diocesan Teachers College.

Present Use: Offices for the Bureau of Education.

Significance: One of the show places of St. Paul at the turn of
the twentieth century.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1889-1891.
2. Architect: Peabody and Stearns.

B. Historical Context:

Constructed in 1889 and said to have cost \$200,000, this 32-room house was the home of James Jerome Hill. One of the show places of St. Paul, the mansion was his home until his death in 1916.

Hill was not only one of the nation's great railroad builders but was a financial leader as well. Born in Ontario, Canada, in 1839, he began work at the age of 14 in a country store. In 1856, he went to St. Paul where he became interested in the trading business.

In 1865, he became agent of the Northwestern Packet Co. Ten years later he organized the Northwestern Fuel Company. In 1878, he gave his major attention to the transportation on the Red River to Fort Garry (now Winnipeg). In that year Hill and several others purchased the St. Paul and Pacific Railroad. Under his leadership, this railroad, under the name of St. Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba, extended its line to the Pacific. He then organized, for construction purposes, other railroads in the Northwest. In 1890, all of the Hill-controlled railroads were combined under one corporated unit as the Great Northern Railway Company. Hill served first as general manager of the system, 1879-1881; vice president, 1881-1882; president, 1882-1907; and chairman of the board, 1907-1912.

PART. II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The James J. Hill House is a somewhat over worked Richardsonian-Romanesque structure, but its picturesque hilltop site and its sheer mass made it an appropriate show place for the industrial and financial giants of St. Paul.
2. Condition of fabric: Good.

B. Deacription of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The three-story-plus-attic house is built on a generally rectangular plan, and features two projecting pavilions flanking a rather massive porte cochere.
2. Foundationa: Granite.
3. Wall construction: Rock-faced red sandstone.
4. Porches: The main entrance features a massive sandstone porte-cochere, with three massive arches and balustrade. There is a sandstone porch on the west end, and "sleeping porches" attached to the north projecting pavilion.
5. Chimneys: Eight sandstone chimneys which served thirty-five fireplaces.
6. Windows: Typical windows appear to be double hung wood sash, each with a single pane.
7. Roof: The roof has a complex form with hipped projections on numerous gabled dormers. Sloping roofs are covered in slate.

C. Description of Interior:

The interior has been greatly altered since it was purchased by the archdiocese.

For a sketch of the first floor plan see field records for this site.

Prepared by:
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Addendum To:
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